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Citizen for President

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPESATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BY
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IN FAVOR OF HR 4599 AND HR 5092
PAY EQUITY

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I am Sonia Johnson, Candidate for President of the United States of the Citizens Party.

I applaud Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar and the Members of this Subcommittee for your work on the issue of comparable worth, equal pay for work of comparable value, which has become one of the major civil rights issues of the 1980s. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on behalf of the women of this nation who have waited far too long for justice.

According to a study done by the National Commission on Working Women, "a wage survey conducted in Philadelphia in 1833 showed women received less for their 78-hour work week than male workers were getting from one 10 hour day." As we sit here today in 1984, women in the United States who work full time still earn less than 60 percent of the average male's wage. That means that American women must work nine days to earn what a man earns in five days. Discrimination on the basis of sex accounts for this earnings gap. And, our sisters of color, who suffer the double burden of discrimination on the basis of race, make disproportionately less than the average.

It has been evident for many years that occupational segregation is a major cause of the national wage gap between men and women. The overall earnings between men and women is greater now than it was in the 1950s, and an analysis of the reasons make it clear that women are caught in low-paying jobs and that when women go into traditionally male-dominated jobs, the pay decreases rapidly. While women occupied 68 percent of clerical jobs in 1959, they held 80 percent of that category by 1978. Today, 80 percent of all women who work are found in four low-paying job categories.

-2-

The issue of pay equity is at the heart of women's poor earnings and, indeed, increasing poverty. It is a national scandal that women and children have experienced a slide into poverty so rapid that we are told that by the turn of the century, all persons in poverty will be women and our children. At the same moment, we are spending unprecedented dollars on military hardware, redistributing our national budget away from human needs to the military.

It is no surprise to the women of this nation that the Reagan Administration is leading the opposition to the issue of pay equity. Mr. Reagan has made it clear to women that the trickle down theory will take care of our needs, and that the marketplace will bring us equity. He voices his opposition to the issue of pay equity by lifting up the objections of employers that changing wage structures to reflect pay equity for women would disrupt the entire economic system of this country. But, this is an economic myth which is being challenged by the women of this nation. We are being joined by a few corporations and state and local governments which have voluntarily structured their wage and job evaluation systems to provide more equitable compensation and opportunities for all employees, including women and minorities, without suffering economic disaster.

To paraphrase the Supreme Court in Corning Glass, companies may want to be unjustly enriched by taking advantage of a situation where they can pay women less than men, and that "may be understandable as a matter of economics," but the law requires "that these depressed wages be raised...as a matter of simple justice....."

Fannie Lou Hammer said it all, "Women are sick and tired of being

sick and tired." Women are tired of the trickle down theory. We are demanding that "justice roll down like a river" so that the women of this nation may live as citizens of equal worth and value.